The Terry Fox Story

A Reading A–Z Level T Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,153

Connections

Writing

Which five words do you think best describe Terry Fox? Explain your reasoning for choosing each word using details from the text.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about the Terry Fox Foundation. Write a brochure for your class highlighting some of the group's recent accomplishments.

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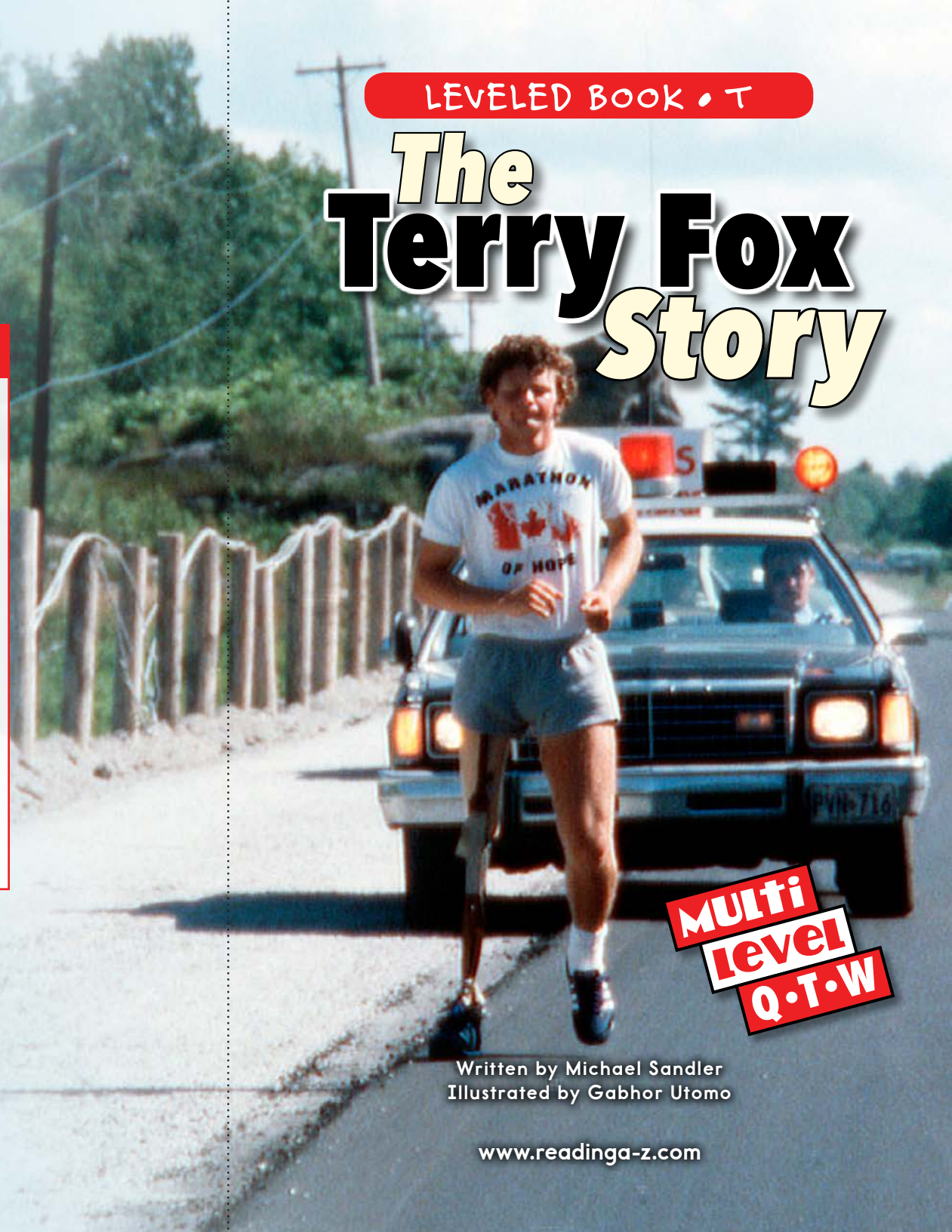

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The Terry Fox Story

MULTI LEVEL Q•T•W

Written by Michael Sandler
Illustrated by Gabhor Utomo

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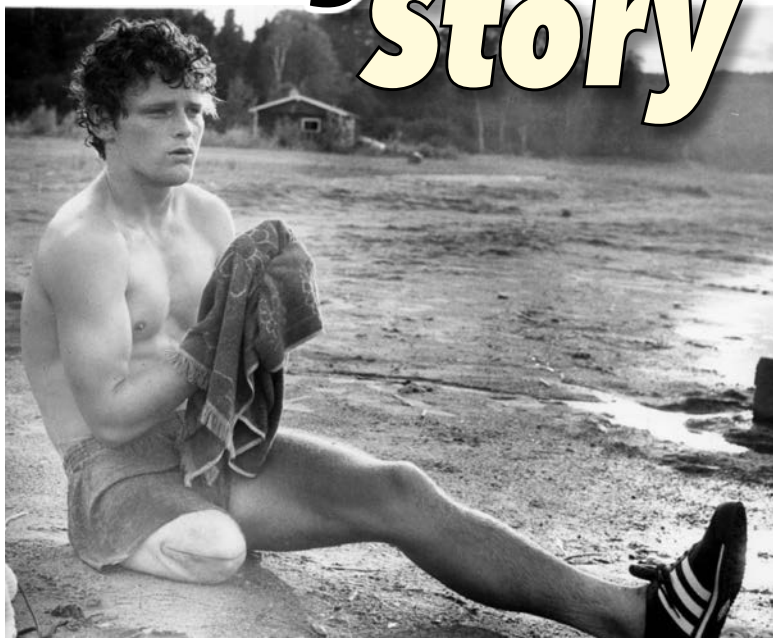

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Focus Question

What does Terry Fox's story teach readers about overcoming challenges?

Words to Know

athlete
challenges
chemotherapy
determination
disease
limping
marathon
prosthetic
research

Cover: Terry Fox runs with a police escort through Ontario in July 1980.

Title page: Terry dries off after a swim in Jackfish Lake in Ontario.

Page 3: Terry talks to reporters, with his parents by his side, at the end of his amazing run.

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Correlation

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One Tough Kid

Terry Fox had a big goal. He wanted to raise money to help in the battle against cancer by running all the way across Canada. The run would be more than 8,000 kilometers (5,000 mi.) long!

Terry began his historic run across Canada in the spring of 1980. By day two, the journey was already difficult as he ran through a blizzard. Terry was running with only one leg; his right leg had been removed above the knee. To walk and run, Terry used a **prosthetic** leg. The stump where it attached hurt with every step.

The Fox family relaxes together. With Terry, from left, are his father Rolly, brother Darrell, mother Betty, and sister Judith.

Challenges were nothing new to Terry. He'd been facing them since childhood. Growing up in the large cities of Winnipeg and Vancouver, he had always shown **determination**. Terry loved challenging sports and games that lasted for days. He was stubborn about finishing any project, no matter how long it took.

Though he wasn't very big or strong, Terry loved to play baseball and soccer. He played them often with his little brother, Darrell, and his best friend, Doug Alward.

His determination showed when he beat the odds to earn a spot on the eighth-grade basketball team. At first, Terry wasn't a very good player. Even worse, he was barely 1.5 meters (5 ft.) tall. Still, through lots of practice, he made the team.

High School and Beyond

Terry continued to train hard at basketball and earned a spot on his high school team. In his senior year, he even shared his high school's **Athlete** of the Year award with his buddy Doug.

Terry also did well in class, graduating high school with As and Bs. Then it was on to college. Terry wasn't sure what he wanted to be in the future, but he knew he wanted to keep playing basketball.

In 1976, he went to Simon Fraser University, which had the best basketball team in the province of British Columbia. Making the team would be just one more challenge.

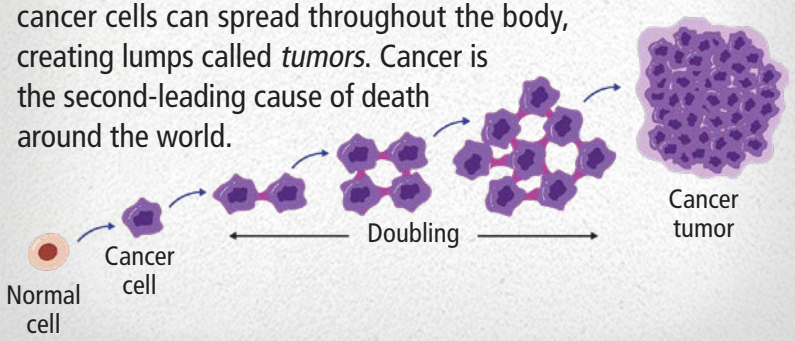
Things Crash

Terry earned a spot on the college team, but then things started to go wrong. In November of his first year at college, he crashed his car. Terry wasn't badly hurt in the crash, but his knee felt sore. He didn't tell anyone about the pain. He thought his leg was just sore from basketball practice.

By late winter, however, he was **limping**. His mother took him to the doctor. The news was terrible. The source of Terry's leg pain was a rare type of cancer. The cause was unknown, but Terry had a kind of cancer that can spread quickly and be deadly.

What Is Cancer?

Cancer is the name for a group of diseases that cause a person's body cells to grow out of control. The disease can start almost anywhere—in bones or even blood. Then, cancer cells can spread throughout the body, creating lumps called *tumors*. Cancer is the second-leading cause of death around the world.



Terry was angry and fearful when he first heard the news. He went through many feelings as his life quickly changed. He moved into the hospital, and his right leg was removed above the knee. Doctors hoped this would keep the cancer from spreading. They couldn't promise, however, that the cancer wouldn't return.

Terry faced new challenges, like learning how to walk using a prosthetic leg. Months of **chemotherapy** followed. The treatment weakened Terry's body and made his hair fall out. While working through these changes, Terry learned to let go of his anger. He met so many other cancer patients in the hospital that he realized he wasn't alone in his struggle.

Terry met many other people who battled cancer, including ten-year-old Greg Scott, who lost his left leg to the disease.

A New and Different Life

Terry began his new life. He could still enjoy sports, though often in new forms. In the summer of 1977, he started playing wheelchair basketball. To strengthen his arms, he pushed his wheelchair up two mountains in British Columbia.

Next, Terry tried running, which was awkward at first with a prosthetic leg. Soon, however, he got the hang of it and began regular training. At his first race, Terry came in last. Still, he felt happy to learn that cancer couldn't stop him from doing what he loved.

A Plan Unfolds

Like other cancer survivors, Terry faced the chance that his cancer could return. He came up with a plan to help in the search to find a cure for the **disease**. He was going to run across Canada. The run would raise money for cancer **research**.

A huge run such as this one would be difficult for anyone. For Terry, it was just another challenge. He carefully planned the trip. He would call his run the Marathon of Hope. His friend Doug would go with him, driving a van.

Terry ran with a hop that let the springs in his artificial leg reset after each step.

Running Across Canada

After thousands of training kilometers, Terry was ready. On April 12, 1980, the Marathon of Hope began in St. John's, Newfoundland, on the east coast of Canada.

From the start, it was difficult. The days were long, and the weather was freezing cold. At rest breaks, Terry and Doug huddled in the van, making snacks. The narrow country roads Terry ran on were dangerous to share with drivers.

Every day his legs ached, and he quickly grew sunburned. Sometimes, Terry showed up in a town exhausted, and no one was there to meet him. In others, whole communities lined the streets to cheer his arrival and give money to the cause.

Terry studies a map while taking a break in the van.

Growing Support

Terry crossed province after province, running the distance of a **marathon** each day. Each week of running was exhausting. Terry's spirits were lifted when his younger brother, Darrell, arrived to join him on the trip. Growing crowds also made him happy. By late June, dozens of television stations and newspapers were covering his run.

The entire country began to follow his journey—even Canada's prime minister. In Toronto, thousands of people lined the streets as he ran through the city. Money for cancer research was streaming in.

Terry was given a hero's welcome at the Toronto City Hall on July 11, 1980.

Terrible News

Then, on September 1, after 5,300 kilometers (3,300 mi.), the Marathon of Hope came to a sudden end. Terry had been feeling sick, and in Thunder Bay, Ontario, he paused to visit doctors. They made an awful discovery: The cancer was back. Terry wanted to keep running, but it was impossible. He had to fly home to get care.

Terry's death shocked and saddened many people across Canada and the world. A large crowd gathered for his funeral in Vancouver.

Terry's Race Goes On

In the end, Terry wasn't able to beat the disease, and on June 28, 1981, he passed away. Although Terry never finished the Marathon of Hope, the run met his goals. He raised an amazing $24 million. Millions of people learned about the need to find cures for different types of cancer.

Terry's fight against cancer didn't end with his death. The Terry Fox Foundation, founded by his family members in 1988, continues to raise money. Terry's story still moves people to support the cause.

Many people take part in yearly Terry Fox runs—one-day events that raise money for cancer research. These runs take place in Canada and countries all around the world. To date, the Terry Fox Foundation has raised more than half a billion dollars to fund cancer research.

The battle against the disease still isn't won, but huge progress has been made. New treatments have helped increase survival rates. Donations raised by organizations such as Terry's have played a big part. Terry's run helped people see the difference a single person can make in the world.

Runners take part in a Terry Fox run in Stanley Park, Vancouver, to honor Terry's memory and raise money for cancer research.

Glossary

athlete *(n.)* a person trained in sports, games, or other activities that require strength, speed, and skill (p. 6)

challenges *(n.)* tests of one's ability to do something (p. 5)

chemotherapy *(n.)* a type of medical treatment that involves the use of chemicals, usually to kill cancer cells (p. 8)

determination *(n.)* the commitment or drive to work toward a difficult goal; resolve (p. 5)

disease *(n.)* a condition, other than one caused by injury, that changes the way a body normally functions; an illness (p. 10)

limping *(v.)* walking in an uneven manner, often because of a leg or foot injury (p. 7)

marathon *(n.)* a long-distance running race that is 26 miles (about 42 km) long (p. 12)

prosthetic *(adj.)* of or relating to an artificial replacement of a body part that is missing (p. 4)

research *(n.)* detailed study of a subject (p. 10)